

CATECHISM OF THE SEPARATE SCHOOL ACT,

In Plain Words by a Plain Man!

QUESTION.—Do you know what the Separate School Act is?

ANSWER.—Yes. It is an Act that was passed in the year 1855, during the last Parliamentary session held at Quebec, the chief provision of which is, that the heads of five families, "being Roman Catholics," have the privilege of establishing a Separate School in any School Section or Ward, for the exclusive education of their own children.

Q.—Are these Separate Schools entitled to Government Grants?

A.—Yes. Every Separate School established under the Act is entitled to a share of the fund annually granted by the Legislature for the support of Common Schools.

Q.—Have any other religious denominations the privilege of erecting a Separate School?

A.—No. Those professing the Roman Catholic religion are the only ones empowered by law to erect Separate Schools, and have thus a preferential claim in the eye of the law over and above all others.

Q.—But have not Presbyterians, Episcopalians and Wesleyans an equal right in the eye of the law with Roman Catholics?

A.—Not in Canada. Here the scruples of the Roman Catholics are protected by legal enactment, but those of the other religious denominations are not known to the law.

Q.—Does not that strike you to be very unfair?

A.—Certainly it does. For 'tis obvious that if any particular sect is permitted to break away from the National System of Education, all others should be entitled to the same privilege.

Q.—What would be the effect if the provisions of the Separate School Act were extended to other religious denominations?

A.—Its effect would be that each sect would have its own school, in which the dogmas of a particular creed would be taught. The country would then be studded with small and inefficient schools, and the National System of Education would be utterly destroyed.

Q.—But have not the Roman Catholics a right to teach their children after their own particular creed?

A.—Most assuredly they have. But then the public moneys should not be devoted for that purpose. If such a system is to be encouraged, the State will soon be found endowing the schools of every sect, and the worst features of the connexion between Church and State inevitably introduced.

Q.—But do all children in the towns and cities go to the National Schools?

A.—No. There are many private schools at which children are taught by accomplished individuals, but with these the government has nothing to do, nor do they receive any money from the state whatever. Persons sending their children to such schools are not exempt from the Common School tax, which they pay in addition to the charges made at these private schools.

Q.—But is not that course pursued to with respect to all?

A.—By no means! The Separate School Act provides that any Roman Catholic shall, upon giving proper notice, be exempt from the payment of all rates imposed within the ward or school section in which he lives, for the support of Common Schools, as also from any contribution to the support of Libraries connected therewith.

Q.—Is this not generally understood in Upper Canada?

A.—It appears not. At the time it passed it created considerable excitement, but the

extent of its pernicious provisions have never been fully realized.

Q.—Under what circumstances was the Act passed?

A.—The Bill was secretly concocted under the auspices of Bishop Charbonnel, and introduced into the Legislative Council towards the end of the Session of 1855 which was held at Quebec. It was sent down to the Lower House on the 21st of May, and finally passed eight days afterwards.

Q.—But the Upper Canadians to whom the act applies could not have been aware of its provisions before it was finally passed?

A.—They were not. It was brought down within eight days of the prorogation of Parliament, and urged on with the utmost speed, notwithstanding that the government had led the Upper Canadian members to believe that no important measure would be introduced, and many had left Quebec for the Upper Province.

Q.—But was not the usual time allowed for deliberation on such an important measure?

A.—No. **ATTY-GEN. MACDONALD** moved the "first reading" on Monday, the 21st of May, and carried its second reading "for the following day." The Reform party asked the **ATTY-GEN.** to give a little time, but he, urged on by **BISHOP CHARBONNEL**, and backed up by a united majority of the Roman Catholic members of the House, would listen to no delay, and **MR. BROWN'S** motion was lost, by a majority of 67 to 17. The Opposition prayed for one week's respite, in order that "a call of the House" might be made, and the members who had left for Upper Canada recalled. But this did not suit the Priest party; they knew that it would be impossible to carry the measure if that course was adopted, and the government continued to press it on the House. **MR. RANKIN** then solicited that three days should be allowed to elapse, but that too was denied; and the second reading of a bill relating entirely to Upper Canada was forced through by the Priest party of Lower Canada, before a copy of the Bill had found its way into the Upper Province!

Q.—Did any of the Upper Canadian members vote for such an injurious measure under such unheard of circumstances?

A.—Yes. Eight of them did so; viz:—**J. A. MACDONALD**, the head of the present Administration; **ROBERT SPENCE**, **M'CANN**, **POWELL**, **JAMES ROSS**, **H. SMITH**, **LYON**, and **DR. SOUTHWICK**!

Q.—But did not the efforts of the Opposition have some success?

A.—Undoubtedly they had; the Bill as it was at first introduced contained some most extravagant clauses. All the Teachers in the Common Schools of Upper Canada were compelled by old laws to be British subjects. The Jesuits, Freres Chretiens, Nuns, and other Popish brotherhoods and sisterhoods, will not swear allegiance to the Crown of England, the Pope is their only acknowledged Sovereign, and this debarred them from being Teachers in the Common Schools. This difficulty had to be got over, as the Priest party were anxious that these Jesuit teachers should have complete control in the schools. So in order to overcome the obstacle, **JOHN A. MACDONALD** put a clause in the Bill *relieving* the Jesuits and other kindred fraternities from taking the oath of allegiance! The Opposition moved that "THE TEACHERS IN THE ROMAN CATHOLIC SEPARATE SCHOOLS OF UPPER CANADA SHALL BE BRITISH SUBJECTS, AS PROVIDED IN REGARD TO ALL OTHER COMMON SCHOOL TEACHERS."

This was voted down by 42 to 5.

Q.—But is a National System of Education of so much importance as you seem to attribute?

A.—Most certainly. A National System of Education is the most efficient system of "Police," and the School Teacher is the best "Policeman." Wherever a National System of Education exists there are the people the most highly educated, and the grosser crimes the least frequent. To break up such a system may be the object of those whose power is chiefly drawn from the ignorance of the masses; but in a country like Canada—where thought as well as person is free—no other than a National System of Education can prevail.

Q.—Has any opinion been expressed on this subject by ecclesiastics of the Roman Catholic Church?

A.—Yes. The Roman Catholic Bishop at Toronto has done so, and has given directions, in a pastoral letter, as to the course to be pursued respecting candidates to Parliament!

Q.—What is that course?

A.—To require from every new candidate for a seat in Parliament a pledge to support Separate Schools.

Q.—Anything else?

A.—Yes. The Bishop counsels his flock "to oppose, by all constitutional means, the re-election of any member who has voted or acted against that support; and if our active co-operation might be of any service in any constituency of our Diocese, for either the said pledge or opposition, we would give it most willingly within the measure of our ability, and without any human consideration."

Q.—Is that the Bishop's language?

A.—It is, as contained in a Pastoral written on St. Nicolas' Day.

Q.—Do the Roman Catholics insist that the support accorded by them to any candidate should be on condition of his supporting Separate Schools?

A.—Most certainly. That is the stipulated condition, as set forth in the Bishop's pastoral letter.

Q.—Do you gather from the language of the Bishop that he will interfere in political contests?

A.—No other meaning can be attached to his words, and already secret negotiations with candidates have been concluded in this matter.

Q.—It would seem then to be the duty of Protestants to oppose this deep-laid scheme to destroy the National System of Education by every means in their power—by uniting in the support of those candidates alone who will pledge themselves to abolish the Separate School Act of 1855, and to support a National System of Education?

A.—That is undoubtedly the case. Protestants have ever been the friends of enlightened education, and if they wish that the cause of education should prosper in Canada, that object can only be attained by upholding with a firm resolve a united educational system, and by placing a veto upon the attempt to divide, and eventually break down the Common Schools.

ELECTORS! The plain facts have been put before you in a plain way, by a plain-spoken man. Judge of the matter for yourselves, and by your vote at the polls determine whether you will return men pledged to support the National System of Education, or to give your votes to those who, professing themselves to be Protestants, are leagued with Roman Catholics in sapping the foundations of Canada's best bulwark.

**VOTE FOR ELIJAH LEONARD, the unflinching
opponent of SEPARATE SCHOOLS!**

